

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 THE HAGUE 001876

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/30/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [AF](#) [NL](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS: TOUR D'HORIZON WITH FOREIGN MINISTER
BOT

REF: A. THE HAGUE 1853

[1](#)B. THE HAGUE 1852 ...

35731

2005-07-01

05THEHAGUE1876

Embassy The Hague

SECRET

05CARACAS1865|05THEHAGUE1852|05THEHAGUE1853

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 THE HAGUE 001876

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/30/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [AF](#) [NL](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS: TOUR D'HORIZON WITH FOREIGN MINISTER
BOT

REF: A. THE HAGUE 1853

[1](#)B. THE HAGUE 1852

[1](#)C. CARACAS 1865

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CLIFFORD SOBEL FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY: Ambassador Sobel, DCM, and POLCOUNS met with Dutch FM Bot on June 30 for a tour d'horizon discussion of outstanding issues. Bot praised the excellent (and improving) state of U.S.-Dutch relations, but identified four irritants to be addressed through ongoing consultations: Dutch dissatisfaction with the U.S. handling of the Trafficking in Persons issue; the lack of opportunities for Dutch businesses in Iraq; perceived U.S. indifference to Non-Proliferation Treaty obligations; and the treatment of detainees at Guantanamo and other U.S. facilities. Bot confirmed that the Dutch are moving forward with plans to send 1,000 to 1,200 troops to Southern Afghanistan in conjunction with British and Canadian forces under ISAF auspices. With regard to Venezuela, Bot confirmed that the Dutch have invited Chavez to the Hague (no date set) but intends to deliver a tough message to discourage Venezuelan meddling in the Antilles. Bot also indicated a willingness to push for a tougher line on Venezuela within the EU. The Dutch have formally renewed their commitment to the NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I) and can do more provided other allies make comparable contributions. Bot would be interested in doing more in the Middle East in a national capacity, possibly including contributions to the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) if asked and also intends to work through the EU to support projects in Gaza. The current crisis in the EU will could end the political career of Luxembourg PM Juncker, according to Bot. Bot expects Solana to remain in place in the hope of one day becoming EU Foreign Minister (Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, on the other hand, told the Ambassador he thinks Fischer may be a stronger candidate for this position.) Bot found his recent meetings with FM Lavrov more productive than those held during the Dutch EU presidency. On Iran, Bot believes the new government will take a harder line domestically while trying to maintain good foreign relations; at the same time, Bot remains concerned that Dutch parliamentary pressures to fund an exile-run satellite TV station would have damaging repercussions for Dutch and EU efforts to moderate Iranian behaviour. END SUMMARY.

DUTCH CONCERNS:

[1](#)2. (C) Foreign Minister Bot noted that Dutch-U.S. relations remained excellent and, if anything, had become stronger over the last four years. This relationship had proven its worth during the Dutch EU presidency, when both sides had grown even closer while pursuing shared objectives. The steady stream of high-level U.S. visitors to the Netherlands (including President Bush) and vice versa had clearly made a positive impact. The Dutch considered themselves valued partners of the U.S., and this partnership had produced tangible results in many spheres. Bot stressed that he was personally committed to ensuring the continuation of a strong transatlantic relationship. In this context, the U.S. and

the Netherlands should work to remove irritations in the relationship, including:

- Trafficking in Persons: The Dutch feel they are contributing significantly to the international fight against Trafficking in Persons and object to being subjected every year to U.S. criticism in this area. Bot said the annual fight to remain in Tier One is a source of a lot of irritation in the Netherlands. The current U.S. system, he continued, appears to punish the Netherlands for being transparent and open and does not sufficiently take into account Dutch efforts to address transit issues.

- Iraq Reconstruction: Bot said he is repeatedly asked, including in parliament that morning, why Dutch companies have not received more contracts in Iraq. There is a perception that countries like France and Germany are receiving more contracts than the Netherlands, even though the Dutch have made significantly greater contributions to Iraqi stability and reconstruction. This is a sore point in the Dutch business community, as major companies (such as Phillips) feel that they are not receiving a fair share of opportunities in Iraq.

- Non-Proliferation: The failure of the NPT Review Conference, Bot said, was viewed by many as a sign that the U.S. is not serious about multilateral non-proliferation efforts. If the U.S. wants support in combating nuclear proliferation, it should also be prepared to assist those countries seeking a peaceful nuclear power capacity as provided for in the treaty.

- Guantanamo: Bot recalled that at the UNHRC meeting in Geneva, the Dutch voted in favor of the U.S.-supported Cuba resolution and the U.S. promised to consider allowing UN Human Rights Rapporteurs to visit Guantanamo. The fact that no such visits have occurred is a source of embarrassment to the Dutch government. The Dutch parliament is also pressing the government hard to explain its arrangements for handling prisoners taken by Dutch forces in Afghanistan to ensure they covered by the Geneva protocols -- i.e., that they are not turned over to American forces. These charges are becoming increasingly difficult to counter, he said. Recalling his discussion with Deputy Secretary of State Zoellick, Bot reiterated that resolving these concerns would make it easier for the Netherlands to respond positively to anticipated future requests. The Ambassador noted that in responding to parliamentary concerns, the Foreign Minister should be aware that there had been no referrals to Guantanamo in the past year.

13. (C) Bot reiterated that he was very satisfied with the tremendous successes of the Dutch-U.S. relationship over the past several years. He felt it was important, however, to restate officially Dutch concerns in the above areas. In response, Ambassador Sobel seconded Bot's overall positive assessment of U.S.-Dutch relations. The key to overcoming the various irritations cited by Bot was to continue communication and consultations at all levels. Ambassador Sobel noted that the TIP, Iraq Reconstruction, and Guantanamo issues were already the subject of intense, high-level dialogue in the Hague and in Washington, which should continue.

AFGHANISTAN:

14. (S) Picking up on Bot's Guantanamo comments, Ambassador Sobel asked Bot whether these concerns would interfere with the Dutch government's plans to staff a second Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan during phase III. Bot said that, on the contrary, the government was moving ahead with plans to send 1,000 - 1,200 troops to Southern Afghanistan in 2006 for an 18-month deployment in conjunction with British and Canadian deployments in the same region. Bot said the Dutch contingent would expect to lead the overall deployment in the region, which could include other forces (from the Baltics, for example) and would staff a headquarters for the middle six months of the deployment. In response to a question from POLCOUNS, Bot confirmed that these plans had been briefed to key parliamentary leaders (including the opposition PvdA) who concurred with the government's plans, with two conditions: 1) the troops should be deployed in an ISAF, vice OEF, capacity; and 2) Dutch Special Forces should be withdrawn from the region prior to the PRT's deployment for purposes of deconfliction. (Note: The current Dutch SOF deployment to OEF was already expected to conclude in April 2006.)

VENEZUELA:

15. (S) Bot confirmed (ref b) that he planned to visit Caracas in the Fall, and that Chavez had been invited to visit The Hague this summer if he is in Europe. He stressed,

however, that he intended to use these opportunities to deliver a strong message to Chavez that Venezuelan meddling in the Antilles would not be tolerated. Although he had not yet seen the specific recommendations sent back by the Dutch Ambassador to Caracas (ref c), Bot said that he would support steps -- including U.S. Military Ship visits and high-level U.S.- Antillean exchanges -- intended to send a clear signal to Chavez. With regard to the internal EU debate on Venezuela, Bot made clear that he did not accept that Spain would have the natural lead on the issue as the Dutch, as a Caribbean power, have national interests at stake. (Later, in a private one-on-one with Ambassador Sobel, Bot indicated that he was not averse to playing a leading role within the EU on this issue, and that would be interested in discussing Venezuela issues with senior U.S. officials to coordinate our approaches.)

IRAQ:

16. (C) Noting that the Dutch parliament had just supported extending the Dutch contribution to the NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I), Ambassador Sobel asked whether the Dutch were still considering expanding their contribution to 100 or more. Bot responded that the Dutch offer to do more remained on the table, but only if other allies made comparable contributions; so far, he said, most had not done a damn thing. The Dutch were training in Iraq while others, like France and Germany, still only made limited contributions outside Iraq. This continues to be a source of frustration, he said, despite Dutch efforts to shame other countries to do more..

GAZA:

17. (C) Recalling the recent visit of MFO Chief Larocco to the Netherlands (ref a), Ambassador Sobel probed Bot on possible Dutch contributions following an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Bot made clear that the Dutch would consider a national contribution to the MFO if asked, but in the meantime would continue to work through the EU on development and reconstruction projects (he noted the Gaza port project as one possible example.) Bot added that he, personally, would like to be more involved in the Middle East but could not do so without an invitation and specific role. Bot said he had raised this more than once with Solana.

EU POLITICS:

18. (C) Turning to internal EU dynamics, Bot said that Solana still wants to be EU Foreign Minister, even if this meant waiting for a long time to come. Bot had harsh words for Luxembourg PM Juncker, who, he said, had hoped to be President of the EU but now stood to lose everything on July 10 if the referendum in Luxembourg goes against the constitutional treaty. Bot suggested that recent polls showing a growing majority voting against the treaty in Luxembourg were swelled by those who just want to see if Juncker will keep his word and resign -- it's like a cockfight. Asked whether Bot thought German Foreign Minister Fischer might be a good candidate to replace Solana (as had been suggested to the Ambassador by NATO SYG Jaap de Hoop Scheffer), Bot said he understood Schroeder intended to leave his current job following the upcoming German elections, regardless of the outcome.

RUSSIA:

19. (C) Asked about the June 28 visit to the Netherlands of Russian FM Lavrov, Bot said that his encounters with Lavrov had been much more productive and pleasant than their meetings during the Dutch EU presidency. Lavrov was less confrontational than in the past regarding Moldova and other areas of concern, but warned the Dutch that the Ukrainians were still a problem with regard to Transnistria despite the change of regime in Kiev. Bot added that the main point of the meeting was to lay the groundwork for a Putin visit next November.

IRAN:

110. (C) Based on a meeting with visiting Iranian parliamentarians the previous week, Bot said he believed the new Iranian government would concentrate first on imposing a harder line domestically while trying to maintain a more reasonable approach in foreign policy. Bot noted that the Dutch parliament's insistence (reconfirmed on June 30) on having the government fund an exile-supported satellite TV station to broadcast independent media into Iran put him in an awkward position, as he did not wish to undermine EU policy regarding Iran or put Dutch business interests there in jeopardy. That said, he confirmed that the government had

no choice but to find a way to implement the binding
parliamentary amendment while doing as little damage as
possible to EU-Iranian relations.
SOBEL